JFK's Doctor Writes of Death Premonition

The late President John F. Kennedy, who was assassinated five years ago Friday, may have had a premonition that he would not survive the presidency.

Dr. Janet Travell, his White House physician, says in the December issue of McCall's magazine that three times she "saw the shadow of death" in the late President's eyes.

In the article, excerpted from Dr. Travell's forthcoming book, "Office Hours: Day and Night", she recalls an afternoon in November, 1960, shortly after he won the election.

"We were sitting beside his father's Palm Beach pool under a sunlit sky when he turned to me and asked abruptly, 'What do you think of the rule that for the last hundred years every President of the United States elected in a year divisible by twenty died in office?'"

"I replied that I did not know about the rule.

"Quickly he named the Presidents and the years of their election: 'William Harison, 1840; Lincoln, 1860; Garfield, 1880; McKinley, 1900; Harding, 1920, and Roosevelt, 1940.'

JANET TRAVELL
. . . "shadow of death"

"You don't really believe such a coincidence can continue," I protested. "The odds against it are too great, and anyway, you aren't superstitious."

"He looked at me silently," Dr. Travell wrote.

Another time that winter in Palm Beach, she recalled "we were sitting in his father's corner room on the second floor. It was about 10 o'clock and the glow of two small table lamps illuminated the room. The front casement window that overlooked the lawn and the Secret Service posts was curtained. The other casement window was wide open . . .

"President Kennedy gazed for a long time through the open window to the sea. Then he said, as if to himself, 'Why should I worry about a second term? My wife will have a pension, and my children will be well cared for.'"

The third time she saw the shadow, she related, they were riding in the back seat of his limousine. She wrote:

"In the back seat of the car ahead of us, a boy was holding a rather large movie camera. The lens was pointed directly at the President.

"As our car slowed, the President glanced up from his newspaper and found himself staring into the eye of the camera. I could see him tense.

"It's only a child with a movie camera," I said.

"He took a deep breath and said, as he resumed reading, "I will not live in fear. What will be, must be."

In the article, Dr. Travell traces the chronology of her years of doctoring the late President.

At one point, she said, he asked her not to go into his medical problems with his wife.

"I don't want her to think she married either an old man or a cripple . . . " Dr. Travell quoted him as saying.